

# Man At War With His Own Species

By Nasim Yousaf

on

Allama Mashriqi's 120<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary

*“Man is perhaps the only species in Nature endlessly at war with his own species and he is doing this unnatural self-destruction...” — Allama Mashriqi*

Allama Mashriqi - reformer, scientist, philosopher, and visionary – dedicated his life to uniting mankind. While Mashriqi made countless efforts to this end through the course of his lifetime, this article presents five key examples which speak to his commitment to unity: (1) his Khaksar Movement's ideology, (2) his speech at Indore (India) in 1938, (3) his efforts to keep India united, (4) his letter to scholars and scientists entitled the *Human Problem*, and (5) his Foreword to a book on Islamic Jurisprudence. An analysis of the aforementioned items provides a sufficient sample set with which to derive meaningful conclusions. In fact, it quickly becomes evident that Allama Mashriqi's vision of equality, social justice and community service are not only still relevant today, but hold the key to solving the problems currently facing the world.

In 1930, Mashriqi established his Khaksar Tehrik (Movement), marking a major milestone in his efforts toward uniting not only the Indian nation, but mankind in general. In order to better understand the connection between the Khaksar Tehrik and the unification of mankind, one needs to examine the ideology and principles that the Movement was founded upon.

The Khaksar Movement was formed on the basic principles of character building, social service, equality and justice for all. Members of the Movement were encouraged to embrace a life of simplicity, in order to foster a sense of self-purification, uniformity and equality. Mashriqi himself shunned the life of luxury in order to live simply, as he believed that a leader could not live in luxury, while the people of the nation lived in poverty. Furthermore, there was to be no disparity among the members of the Movement, regardless of their ethnic or religious background. Even the Khaksar flag and badge (which every Khaksar was required to wear) were inscribed with the word “Akhuwat” (brotherhood) as a symbol of their commitment to the unification of all people.

Having embraced the fundamental ideals of the Movement, the Khaksars spread their message among the people through community service. Mashriqi espoused that the Khaksars should help anyone in need - whether Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Jew, etc. Mashriqi believed that it was important to respect individuals from all religions, and that there was no better means to foster unity than providing social service. There may be no simpler example of the Khaksars respect for all religions than the fact that they saluted visiting non-Muslim leaders, and on a number of occasions, presented them with the Guard of Honor.

The overall ideology of the Khaksar Movement was perhaps best summarized by Khan Bahadur Shaikh Fazl-i-Haq Piracha, speaking at the Legislative Assembly debates on September 23, 1942:

“The motto of this movement is discipline, its line of action social service, and its aim peace - the essence of Islam...Its principles are betterment of physical and spiritual health, development of individual and collective character, the ending of all controversies through extensive social service, strict discipline and all-embracing love. Every one who believes in one God can be its member...Every one works, toils, serves and strives to bring man and man together.”

Thus, the establishment of the Khaksar Tehrik set an example for the nation to follow, and marked Mashriqi's first major step towards unity. Along with the founding of the Movement, Mashriqi also continued to spread his vision through countless speeches and writings. In this article, I will quote one speech in particular, which speaks to the core of Mashriqi's belief in the need for unity. In his presidential address at the All-Faith Conference held in Indore, India from April 18-21, 1938, Mashriqi explained:

“I have already drawn your attention towards the paradox that everyone in the world believes his own religion to be ‘true’ and insist on the falsity of all others. I have also put forward that truth being the one and the same everywhere. Scientifically speaking, no religion can claim to be true on this very ground. The most obvious conclusion we arrive at then is that either the messengers who claim to have brought their messages from the One and the same God must either have been imposters of the worst type who deceived Mankind, or if they were not so the One message delivered by them from the one Providence must have been hopelessly misunderstood by man.” (Source: *Al-Islah*, Lahore, May 27, 1938, Vol. No. 05, No 21, p.4)

Mashriqi's statement reflects his in-depth understanding of the notion that the dissension among various religions was essentially baseless. Based on this, Mashriqi rejected the idea of exerting energy in proving the speciousness or hollowness of another's religion. Despite Mashriqi's message to the participants at the Conference, the prevailing situation remained the same, and the divisive atmosphere continued.

In the years subsequent to his speech at the All-Faith Conference, Mashriqi continued to work tirelessly for unity. His efforts to keep India united during this time period speak volumes for his commitment to the unification of mankind as a whole. Mashriqi continued to push for unity, while his contemporaries – in pursuit of their own political ends - spread communalism and sought the division of India on the basis of religion. Mashriqi firmly believed that partition would bring animosity among the people and separate families and friends forever. Mashriqi's efforts during this time period for a united India included working to bring about a settlement between the All-India Muslim League and the Indian National Congress, pushing for a Jinnah-Gandhi meeting, framing the Khaksar Constitution of Free India (1946), and seeking to unite the Muslim political parties in India under a common flag (the All-India Azad Muslim League).

Despite Mashriqi's best efforts to keep the nation united, India was divided into three parts in 1947, an action that resulted in a devastating holocaust. Mashriqi was saddened by the slaughter and separation of his countrymen. Indeed, he had been the only leading political figure who had refused Lord Mountbatten's partition plan; other leaders who spoke of Muslim-Hindu unity and an undivided India, accepted the plan.

In spite of the partition of India, Mashriqi refused to surrender his efforts towards unity. It is important to note that Mashriqi was working for harmony not only within the Indian-subcontinent, but outside the country as well. In July of 1951, he sent a letter to various scholars and scientists of the world. In this letter, entitled *Human Problem*, Mashriqi cautioned that the "collective stupidity of the Human race is resulting in its unnatural development towards decay and possible ultimate extinction" (p. 3). He further wrote that God did not send Prophets to "pit man against man" (p. 3). Mashriqi asked scientists to study religion in light of science and enlighten the human race accordingly. In other words, if scientists succeeded in proving that the purpose of religion was not to *divide*, but to *unite*, then the desired results could be achieved.

Mashriqi believed that the constant infighting of man was counter to the laws of nature. He felt that in studying the works of the Creator, one would arrive at the conclusion that God could not have sent the Prophets to divide humans. Thus, Mashriqi believed that it was counter to both nature and religion for man to be at "war with his own species" (Source: *Human Problem*, p. 3).

In another example, Mashriqi furthered the idea of unity in a Foreword entitled "Man to Develop as One Nation" (for a book on Islamic Jurisprudence, published in early 1954):

"The law of the Quran, in the capacity of Divine Message to Mankind, is perfectly universal and applicable to all nations. It knows no racial, geographical or religious bounds as it applies to the whole of Human species." (Source: *Al-Mashriqi - Man's Destiny*, edited by Syed Shabbir Hussain, p. 227)

In closing, the aforementioned examples, taken from different junctures in Mashriqi's life, clearly show that he was eternally devoted to unity. Unfortunately, they also reveal that in each instance, Mashriqi's pleas were ignored. This trend has regrettably continued in recent years. Selfish leaders, pursuing their own vested interests, continue to divide people on the basis of religion, race, color, etc. in order to gain or maintain political or economic power. Intoxicated with political standing and wealth, they do not wish to seek unification, because divisiveness allows them to remain in power. It is time for people to wake-up and reject all those who talk of dissension and discrimination. Enough is enough! It is time to revive Mashriqi's message of unity. And the solution begins at the local and individual level; parents should inculcate in their children that all humans are equal and that we must seek to unite, not divide. Surely if this is done the world would be a much better and safer place to live.

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